

Belmont Vision Implementation Committee

Final - Meeting Minutes for April 12, 2012

Members in attendance: Tim Bowman, Sara Masucci, Jennifer Page, Paul Solomon, Doug John, Michael Sattler, Wendy Rundle

Others in attendance: Mary Power

Meeting convened by chair at 7: 10pm in the Flett room of the Belmont Library.

1. Minutes: Minutes of the March 12, 2012 meeting were approved.

2. Recruitment of New VIC Members: Members introduced themselves to Mary Power, a Belmont resident who has submitted her application, to the Board of Selectmen, for appointment to the VIC. Mary provided a brief summary of her community and professional activities.

If Mary is appointed then, it was agreed, all vacant VIC seats are filled. The terms of three current members expire at the end of June 2012, and VIC members should be actively looking for candidates for possible vacant seats.

3. Town Day: Town Day is May 19th this year. Jennifer asked for volunteers to cover the VIC table and to distribute flyers around town. Motions were made and it was agreed that the VIC will share its table with Sustainable Belmont (who are selling rain barrels this year). It was also agreed that we will share with Jenny Fallon and Anne Paulsen who have authored a walking map of Belmont as part of the Walk Boston effort (www.walkboston.org).

4. Community Communications and Future Planning: Michael reviewed his handout on "Belmont Crossroads" and "Belmont Commonplace." He enthusiastically supports this on-line blog approach to civic discourse for many reasons, not limited to the fact that it is an innovative way to further Belmont's Vision, it is cheaper and easier than some other types of efforts, and it augments the existing community discussion infrastructure. He noted that this would not replace "face-to-face" interchanges, and suggested that government officials and departments could join the blog.

The group discussed the idea of such a vehicle; some questions and suggestions were:

- VIC members could "seed" the blog with questions/issues of particular interest
- Topics of information from the blog could be used as themes for future public events (such as the annual Envision Belmont Fall forum)
- Reference was made to Robert Putnam's book *Bowling Alone*, and that this on-line forum is an example of the evolution from older structures (eg bowling leagues) to newer ones

Michael also shared that, through a karmic set of circumstances involving Tim, he learned about a young start-up called OurCommonPlace.com that is already executing this idea. The founder, Pete Davis, has some Massachusetts communities participating (Chelmsford). Michael and Pete have met, and Michael shared what he learned.

Discussion ensued, which included:

- Exploring the possibility of encouraging “OurCommonPlace.com” to use Belmont as a test community
- The value of this tool, independent of its possible role and impact regarding our Fall event
- The importance and value of the involvement of town boards and committees as users, as well as community groups, schools, neighborhoods, etc.
- Questions about who moderates the postings/discussions (unsure)
- How is this different than the Yahoo listserve (better way to do similar things)
- This could become what the Town’s website should be
- Concerns about privacy issues
- Questions about possible downsides to this (what are they?)

Overall, VIC members were enthusiastic about the value this would provide, and interested in exploring this further. Michael offered to invite Pete Davis to our April 26, 2012 meeting.

It was agreed that Tim would invite the BOS, School Committee, IT departments, Roger Colton, and others to attend that meeting as well.

Overall, VIC members felt that this tool could be a strong contribution to public dialogue and civic discourse in Belmont.

5. Other Business: It was agreed that there was no other formal business.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Wendy Rundle, Secretary Pro Tem